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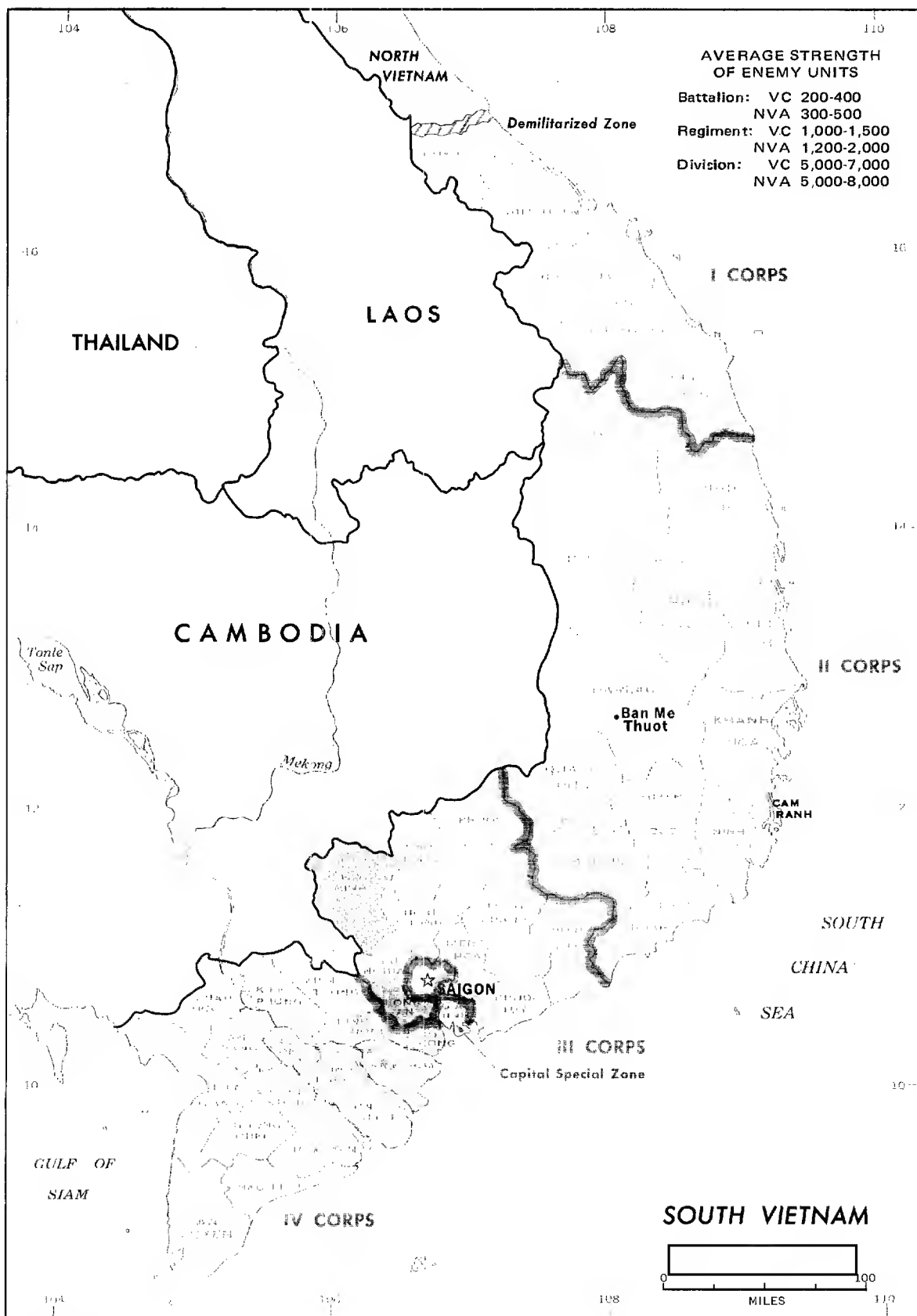
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Vietnam: No Communist main force unit initiated a military engagement on 9 April; most major units remained preoccupied with regroupment and refitting.

The only engagements involving significant enemy units were initiated by allied forces. Near the Cambodian border, in Tay Ninh Province, a South Vietnamese airborne battalion killed 30 troops of an enemy company, believed to be from the 271st Regiment of the Viet Cong 9th Division. Friendly losses were six killed and 51 wounded. US forces killed another 47 Communist troops some 20 miles southwest of Saigon, in Long An Province, without taking any casualties. In the day's only other incident of significance, the enemy lobbed mortar shells into Ban Me Thuot city.

* * * *

The Communists appear to have been caught off balance by recent South Vietnamese public relations initiatives on the peace issue, particularly President Thieu's address to the National Assembly on 7 April. Communist responses so far have been highly defensive, and have not rejected Saigon's proposals outright.

At the National Liberation Front's special news conference in Paris on 8 April, the Front spokesman answered all questions about recent South Vietnamese statements with clichés and epithets totally lacking in substance. This Communist reaction suggests that the enemy is having trouble coming to grips with Saigon's more confident stance concerning a future political settlement.

[REDACTED]

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Czechoslovakia: The Dubcek leadership is faced with an increasingly complicated domestic situation.

Students in Prague intend to strike in the near future over newly imposed press restrictions. Trade union members might join them--possibly by calling for a general strike--if there are harsh reprisals against the students. This could set off a new wave of anti-Russian demonstrations that might, in turn, cause another Soviet intervention and topple the Dubcek leadership. Party officials and trade union leaders are trying to calm the situation but may have difficulty because many young people have been alienated by the regime's recent measures to meet Soviet requirements for "normalization."

The leadership also appears to be concerned about its diminishing support within the Czechoslovak Army, once a source of its strength and confidence. President Svoboda yesterday made his fourth trip within a week to key military posts, probably to assess the situation and to use his prestige to try to ensure continued support from the army.

Most junior officers and younger soldiers reportedly have progressive political leanings and are basically anti-Soviet. They are said to oppose the use of Czechoslovak troops to deter further anti-Russian disturbances, and to resent the gradual re-introduction of pro-Soviet officers and Russian advisers into the higher echelons of the defense establishment. Yesterday the Czechoslovak Military Council announced that it will crack down on anti-Soviet dissidence in the armed forces, and will take punitive action against military personnel charged with participating in the civil disturbances on 28-29 March.

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USSR: The Soviet Army may be improving its mobilization capability.

A large number of civilian central motor pools throughout the USSR were placed under military control last fall, [REDACTED] When these motor pools were taken over by the military, the number of trucks was increased, older vehicles and those in need of repair were replaced with new trucks, and drivers over age 45 were replaced by younger persons. Until actually mobilized, however, the trucks still serve civilian purposes.

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Many Soviet ground force divisions in the USSR do not now have their full complement of trucks and other wheeled vehicles. Such vehicles must be acquired from the civilian economy when the divisions are mobilized. The mobilization prior to the Czechoslovak invasion probably underscored the shortage of suitable trucks for military operation.

A limited number of civilian motor pools probably were under military control before the invasion.

[REDACTED] the mobilization of vehicles from other civilian sources at the time of the Czechoslovak invasion was less than satisfactory because the need to overhaul and repair many of these vehicles delayed their assignment to military units. [REDACTED]

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Venezuela: The Caldera government is taking a more pragmatic approach to foreign relations than its recent predecessors.

An announcement on 7 April that diplomatic relations will be re-established with Peru marks the first deviation from the ten-year-old Betancourt Doctrine that Venezuela would not recognize governments that came to power unconstitutionally. The move sets the stage for recognizing the military governments of Argentina and Panama. Talks began with Argentine officials at the UN on 7 April, and

[redacted] talks with both Argentina and Panama would move quickly.

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At the same time, the government is pushing ahead with negotiations to establish or re-establish relations with the USSR and some of the Eastern European states. These negotiations were begun by the previous administration and have already produced agreement in principle to resume relations with the USSR and Czechoslovakia.

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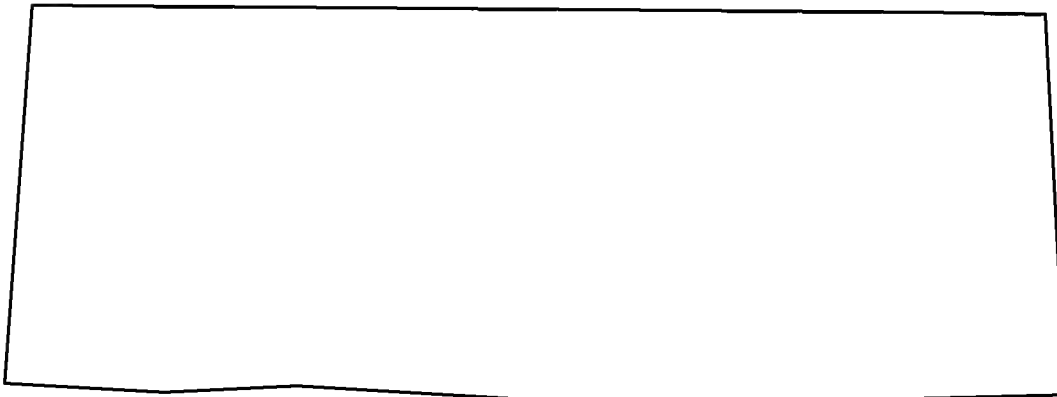
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Mexico: Security officials are girding for leftist student demonstrations demanding the release of student leaders and professors jailed during last year's riots.

Security forces have been given extra training and more men and equipment, and government leaders have taken a number of other steps to prevent the demonstrations planned for late April from mushrooming into full-scale riots like those in 1968.



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NOTE

USSR: The Soviets have developed a compacted form of superhard material of considerable importance to metal machining industries in reducing machining costs and time. The material, believed to be boron nitride, is equal in hardness to diamond, and superior to diamond in retaining hardness at high temperatures and in resisting chemical attack. Because it can be produced in rod form in sufficiently large sizes, it has particular value for the manufacture of high-temperature, high-speed cutting tools and for mining where extremely hard and large cutting tools are required. [REDACTED]

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